MASSACHUSETTS.

Systematic History.

THE

WORCESTER RECORDS.

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The Worcester Records.

PROCEEDINGS AT A DINNER

GIVEN AT

The Lincoln House in Worcester,

ON

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 3D, 1897,

TO

FRANKLIN P. RICE,

IN

RECOGNITION OF WORK ACCOMPLISHED IN THE DEVELOPMENT

OF

SYSTEMATIC HISTORY.

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CITY OF WASHINGTON.

THE DINNER.

For some time previous to the completion of the work of editing and printing the Worcester Records, it had been felt by certain friends of Mr. Rice and by others who were interested in record preservation, that the occasion would merit special notice, and that some formal recognition of the service rendered, of the magnitude of the undertaking, and of its influence as a pioneer and practical example in this line, would be proper. While Mr. Rice fully acquiesced in this view, he desired that the occasion might be passed over with as little ceremony as would be consistent with propriety, and he indicated the form most agreeable to him. It was, under the circumstances, thought best that he should have the direction of the plan and details of the affair, and all arrangements were made in accordance with this understanding. The Lincoln House in Worcester was selected as the place, and Wednesday, November 3d, 1897, at half-past one o'clock in the afternoon, was the time fixed for the gathering. The company assembled included Mr. Fred L. Hutchins, President of The Worcester Society of Antiquity; Mayor A. B. R. Sprague; Robert T. Swan, Esq., Commissioner of Public Records of the Commonwealth; Mr. Samuel S. Green, Librarian of the Worcester Free Public Library; Dr. George S. Adams of Westborough; Mr. Samuel E. Staples, Founder of The Worcester Society of Antiquity; Mr. Edmund M. Barton, Librarian of the American Antiquarian Society; Mr. Francis E. Blake of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston; Messrs. John C. Otis, William F. Abbot and Franklin P. Rice; and Mr. George Maynard, stenographer.

A full report of the exercises which followed the excellent dinner is contained in the following pages.

Stenographically Reported by George Maynard.

REMARKS OF PRESIDENT HUTCHINS.

I congratulate myself that I am permitted, during the period of my administration of the affairs of The Worcester Society of Antiquity, to see the completion of that work which has carried its name across the continent, and I account it a very great pleasure to join with you in some slight recognition of the service of our friend upon my right.

He has been the prime mover and sole executor of this truly important undertaking, which he has pursued under trying circumstances, with an unflagging zeal for absolute accuracy and typographical perfection.

It is his plodding industry and painstaking care which have given us these nine volumes of Worcester's Proprietary, Court, and Town Records.

Let us consider for a moment what this work signifies, —not alone that this mass of well-indexed information is accessible to all who desire to consult it, not alone that these Records are found in both public and private libraries throughout the country, but what is far more important to us, that the absolute safety of these early Records of Worcester, under the proprietary and town governments, is now assured; no mutilation or destruction, either malicious or accidental, is now possible.

So it is eminently proper that some fitting notice be taken of the completion of this work, which, in justice to truth, it must be stated, lacks a few pages of the Records and the index of the last volume, but through difficulties

in arranging for this meeting later, it was thought best not to await the completion of this small portion.

So it is well that this comprehensive work, more comprehensive, perhaps, than any other single example in the State, should be appreciated by the Society whose chief renown comes from having its name upon the title-pages of these volumes; by the City whose records are thus preserved; by the State in which it was the pioneer example and now stands as one for others to emulate; and by those who have been otherwise benefitted.

Mr. Rice, with characteristic modesty, shrank from any formal public testimonial, but recognizing the propriety of taking some notice of this mile-stone in Record work, and being assured, by those who knew something of his work and sacrifice, that some demonstration would be made, he consented to this form with the condition that he be allowed to direct it.

And so, gentlemen, we are here to extend congratulations. First you, Mr. Rice, are to be congratulated in that the inception of the plan was a new departure, in that its carrying out has been so faithful under all the discouragements incident thereto, and last, but not least, upon the perfectness and typographical beauty of your work.

We all await, with eagerness, your story of its inception and growth.

ADDRESS OF FRANKLIN P. RICE.

Mr. President, Mr. Mayor, and Friends:

The completion of an undertaking which has required the labor of several years, and the exertion of such ability and energy as I possess, is an event which cannot be contemplated with indifference. Nor, perhaps, can it be characterized in ordinary terms. I trust, therefore, that I shall be pardoned in the expression of whatever may savor of elation or self-gratulation at the successful outcome of a long-cherished purpose, and that due allowance will be made, as my remarks proceed, in consideration of the difficulty experienced by anyone in the attempt to describe his relation to an enterprise in which he has borne the principal or the sole part, without exhibition of more or less of what might seem to be egotism.

The example presented in the publication of the Worcester Records, is, so far as my knowledge extends, the first and at present the only one, in which the records of the whole period of proprietary and town governments of a place, together with all the recorded births, marriages and deaths within that time, have been put in print.

The idea, now becoming general, of reproducing town and other similar records in their minutiæ, was not only new, but in this particular instance original, when I began. There were two or three sporadic cases of earlier date, but of these I did not know at the time.

Vanity, which can be easily gratified, and often at another's expense, was not an inducing element in this

work. There is sufficient proof in the statement which will follow, that, if at any time during the progress of the undertaking, moderate expectations of pecuniary reward were entertained, they were soon extinguished by the logic of facts. Antiquarian taste did not prevail; and with eight lines of ancestry in this country too easily followed back to the period 1629 to 1640, I felt little or no enthusiasm in genealogical research. With these disclaimers the main purpose should be distinctly stated. Briefly, it was to make the original sources of history accessible and available for use, in accordance with a plan formed many years ago.

The idea was very simple. If we could know all the elementary facts, then we could begin to know history, and not until then. History has been and is being written from too few premises, and it is the rule rather than the exception that the elaborate theory and logical conclusion are overturned by the later bringing to light of facts unknown to the ambitious narrator. Evidently the time to *write* history is not in the immediate future; the preliminary work of accumulation and classification remains in large measure to be done, and to the drudgery involved in the performance of this service we, of the present generation, ought cheerfully to submit. And so I wanted to see all the original material brought together in system in public and central depositories, so that in a few minutes a question could be settled, which, scattered and inaccessible as so many facts now are, cannot certainly be determined. Another great advantage would be the assurance as to the existence or non-existence of desired information.

The real philosophy of history cannot be attained so long as the sources of information remain undeveloped, and in historical as in other scientific investigation, the

effort now is to reach the obscure yet fundamental elements which constitute the substance of the whole. The immense mass of material in New England in the form of town, county and other records, most of it hidden and unknown, presented a rich mine to explore, and one from which the most valuable and satisfactory results might be expected; and it was with the idea, at first crude and imperfectly formed, of subjecting this material to minute classification, that I entered into the work. I cannot take time now to make an elaborate statement, or to detail the several changes in method from the preparation of a general reference key to a stated locality, an index of selected subjects, or abstracts of certain periods, until, finally, the determination was reached to print the original in its entirety, without abridgment. It is enough to say that I regarded the matter in its practical and scientific aspects, and, after the plan expanded and developed, I originated and applied the name SYSTEMATIC HISTORY to the accumulated results, a term which is now coming into use. That I have not been able to accomplish as much as I expected, so far as extent of territory covered is concerned, is admitted; but human endeavor is so often restricted that this confession is not an exceptional one.

There were subordinate reasons which influenced me. The desire to do something for the Commonwealth and for the City, and to identify myself with it; and later, the purpose to gain a special reputation for The Worcester Society of Antiquity for practical work. Selfish motives operated to the extent that in all this I was doing what I wanted to do.

My interest in, and investigation of these matters began in 1869, and during the next few years I collected considerable material which has since proved useful. In 1873

I set up a press for book printing, as this seemed to be the only way in which to reach a tangible result, the charges for producing this kind of work in regular offices being at that time appalling and far beyond my slender means. My first attempts were only in part worthy of preservation, and most of the material has been worked over.

One November day in 1869 I was pleasantly accosted by a gentleman with whom I was afterwards intimately associated; and in this accidental, and, at that time, apparently insignificant circumstance, was the germ of The Worcester Society of Antiquity. Mr. Staples manifested an interest in my work, and comprehended its plan with certain definite ideas of his own in the project for a society, which we discussed a great deal for two or three years. The matter was probably finally determined by a visit we paid to the old Mechanic Street Burial Ground in October, 1874, after its upheaval had been suggested; and on that memorable 23d day of January, 1875, the first meeting of the new Society was held.

I was induced to coöperate in this movement by the not very strong hope that such an association as was proposed would sustain and carry forward the work which then seemed too formidable for single effort. This expectation was doomed to ultimate disappointment, but the desired result has, to some extent, been realized in a different way.

After a period of doubtful consideration, the Society was quickened to action by the advent of Clark Jillson, and under his able direction the first publication was issued, to be very soon followed by the second, which contained the Burial Inscriptions. With this encouraging example and outlook, I proceeded in the preparation of the first book of Worcester Town Records, some assistance in the copy-

ing and indexing—all that I ever received—being given by two interested members. But this was brought to a standstill when it was found that the debt contracted by the Society in the printing of the last publication could not be paid. This literally put a bar to further *Proceedings*. As I remember, this was the general impression; I, for one, accepted the situation, and for a time turned my attention in another direction, and even abandoned the thought of Record publication in connection with the Society. At this juncture Judge Jillson divulged his intention of insuring the publication of the yearly Proceedings by affording such assistance as might be needed until the affairs of the Society would warrant it in going forward; and we all remember how faithfully this assurance was fulfilled.

To what extent or in what manner this circumstance operated in reviving the Record publication, I will not assert. The fact is significant that the first book was within a few months issued from the press, and this was followed in quick succession by the second book, the Proprietors' Book, the Revolutionary Records, and the Records of the County Court of General Sessions from 1731 to 1737. These volumes were published in ten parts under the seal of the Society, which received seventy-five copies of each part for its exchange list free of expense. Four years and three months were spent in their production, and the lowest estimated cost was $4,300. With one exception no direct assistance was given the work in money, but members and others subscribed for copies at a nominal price, an investment which has paid more than compound interest, for the numbers were very soon in demand at two or three times the price originally paid, and the editions were exhausted. The total amount which I received, including four hundred dollars' worth

purchased by the City, was $986. At this point, publication was suspended for obvious reasons, but with the firm intention to resume under circumstances more favorable in a pecuniary way.

During the next three months I prepared and published a book on my own account which returned me $400. With this sum I began to copy the Records of the Inter-Charter period, at the State House in Boston, with the intention of including them with the Collections of The Worcester Society of Antiquity; but this project encountered remonstrances in certain quarters of such a nature that I abandoned it after some progress had been made. About this time I prepared a plan and suggested the passage of an Act by the Legislature to require the printing of their records by the towns in the State in such yearly portions as would not be burdensome until all to the year 1850 were printed. This, in 1884, was premature.*

I want to say a word here to forestall criticism to the effect that this work had been pursued thus far with a degree of enthusiasm which common wisdom would not justify nor business principles maintain. I know that the performance of such service is sometimes, in consequence, followed by neglect of the common proprieties as well as evasion of the more serious responsibilities of life. Deeply as I was interested I did not forget the duty I owed to society and to myself. John Randolph's injunction, "Pay as you go," was always in mind, and if this undertaking had interfered with other obligations I should at once have

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* The objection to this plan advanced by Mr. Swan—that forcing action through legislative power would result in many cases in throwing the preparation into incompetent hands—is, I think, a valid one.

abandoned it. I had other resources with which to sustain it; and, of course, a different pecuniary result was anticipated. One thing made the task easy: the close and cordial feeling and unity of purpose which animated the Society during this period.

At the time that the printing of the Worcester Town Records was resumed, in 1889, with the intention of completing the work to 1848, I had what I considered satisfactory assurances that at least seventy-five per cent. of the cost would be provided, and I felt willing to assume the remaining twenty-five per cent., as a portion of the edition would remain in my hands to be sold. The estimate presented for the consideration of the City Council in asking for appropriations to the amount of a nominal half of the expense, assumed that the remaining Town Records from 1784 to 1848, together with the Births and Marriages from the earliest recorded to the last named year, could be included in five printed volumes of three hundred pages each, the City Council to vote the money in five annual instalments, a volume of Records to be issued each year. This arrangement was carried out, the several City governments from 1889 to 1893 cordially responding, but so much more matter than was estimated had to be printed that a volume could not be completed within a year. This plan was adopted because, after consultation with the City Finance Committee, it was thought doubtful if even this amount would be voted; and further, in order that the Society might publish the volumes, which it would not be allowed to do if the City could by any means be induced to defray the whole expense. Of the three hundred copies printed, one hundred were for the use of the City, and eighty copies were to supply the exchange list of the Society; and as the latter had received the benefit

of the first series of these Records, it was thought just and proper that it should contribute something towards the cost of the later volumes. As the Society had at that time no funds, it was understood that a special canvass of the members was to be made, and also, that certain interested citizens were to be applied to for direct money assistance; and, as I have said, with these assurances I felt safe in going forward. I could not foresee the difficulties which afterwards developed in consequence of the unexpected proportions of the matter to be printed, and of the suddenly assumed hostile attitude in a quarter from which, in view of the greatly increased labor and expense to be incurred under the new conditions, the most helpful encouragement should have emanated.

As the work progressed it developed that a serious mistake had been made in calculating the amount of matter the manuscript would make, the difference in the handwritings not being apparent at first glance. Furthermore, so many deficiencies were discovered among the Births that I voluntarily made a thorough revision by which over eleven hundred names not on the town books were supplied, and many errors corrected. In addition to this, it was thought that the recorded Deaths from 1826 to 1848, should be included in an appendix, all of which was done at the editor's expense. As the result, instead of 1,500 pages in the five volumes, there are 2,133, or considerably more than one-third increase. Perhaps if this fact had been properly appreciated, the efforts to unduly hasten the undertaking, so unreasonably persisted in, would have ceased. This interference only had the tendency to induce a state of distraction in the editor's mind, when he needed all his powers to overcome the difficulties in the work itself. Notwithstanding these troubles I made little

complaint, and I felt that I was in honor bound to complete the volumes under the arrangement.

Before work on the first volume had progressed very far, Mr. Salisbury's offer to the Society of a building lot was made, and on its acceptance he supplemented it with a gift of $5,000. All the energies of the Society were now properly directed to the purpose of erecting a building; and, as it was thought that efforts in soliciting subscriptions for the Record work would interfere with raising money for the structure, I, at the request of the building fund committee, acquiesced in the abandonment of that part of the plan for the time being, although by so doing I was assuming a serious responsibility. I was told that I would be helped in one way or another after the building was assured, and I proceeded with the printing as rapidly as possible. After the fact transpired that the first volume would be largely increased over the estimate, the necessity of some assistance became apparent. A room which it was proposed to devote to the publication work had, without suggestion or solicitation on my part, been included in the plan of the building; and, of this, after serious consideration, I accepted a lease for five years, which was unanimously voted by the Society upon the recommendation of a committee which had been appointed to confer with me. The members of this committee were to undertake the raising of a specified sum yearly for four years. This and the use of the room were to be considered as so much assistance towards the reduction of the large deficit which was to be met. These conditions have, it is well known, been fulfilled only in part. During the present year the energetic efforts of President Hutchins and Messrs. John C. Otis and William F. Abbot, have resulted in the carrying out, in greatly reduced measure, of the original intention.

In going to the building I was influenced largely by the advice of prominent members of the Society, who esteemed it a great advantage to the association to have its publication work conducted on its own premises. That they were not alone in this opinion is attested by the fact that about this time I received proposals from two other Worcester institutions to enter into similar connections, but my place was with The Worcester Society of Antiquity. Another strong inducement was in the opportunity which it then seemed was about to open to greatly expand the work of printing original material under the auspices of the Society. This was embodied in a proposition to undertake the preparation and printing of the Probate Files of Worcester County,—not in the form of a simple index to leading names, to which the publication now in process by the County Commissioners will be confined, and which, I am convinced, will in course of time, with the advance of sentiment and a clear understanding of the subject, prove inadequate and unsatisfactory; but in comprehensive abstracts of the wills and estates, giving the names of all parties concerned, with other necessary particulars—a compilation intended to relieve the investigator of nine-tenths of the labor of research now necessary. This project came about in a manner that was, in itself, proof of confidence in the power and perseverance to carry it successfully through, and means to sustain its execution were to be forthcoming as needed. Of course, this implied the assistance of additional hands, and a modification of former methods, and in contemplation of this I began to fit up the room at the new building. But instead of expanding, I was compelled, by the train of singular circumstances that followed, to contract; and, after a period during which the printing of the Worcester Records was suspended, in

doubt whether to issue them further as Society publications, to carry them on independently elsewhere, or to abandon them altogether, the work was resumed with a somewhat limping gait, and has proceeded to the end.*

I do not intend, Mr. President, with the tangible proof before us that all adverse conditions attending the production of these nine volumes have been overcome, to enter into a recital of the strange occurrences which took place after the removal of the Society to its new quarters. The frantic demonstrations which seemed to have for their object the sinking of identity, and obliteration of all memory of former purposes and methods; and the violent attempts to disrupt the ties which had previously bound the members together in a common interest, although firmly resisted by a solid phalanx, could not but have their effect upon this undertaking. Probably the sacrifice of the Record work was hardly considered in comparison with the field of enticing possibilities in other directions which an ecstatic vision presented. Notwithstanding this serious crisis the Worcester Records are in print.

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*The purpose to compile and publish the Probate Records was entertained for several years, but the difficulties to be overcome in the printing of the Worcester Records, the long financial depression, and the distrust felt by members and others who were interested in practical work in regard to the future policy of the Society, prevented any approach to a realization of this project until the year 1897. At that time, so rapidly had public sentiment advanced, it was found that the County Commissioners had authorized the printing of an index to the Probate Files. It was, therefore, decided to apply the means offered to the development of other material. The possibilities of this movement with the aid of the Systematic History Fund can at present only be conjectured.

In other quarters where the most cordial and intelligent coöperation should have been given I was met by querulous criticism, and a disposition to obstruct or to stop the progress of the work, in attempts at interference which, had they not been resisted, would have seriously disarranged my plans, and subjected me to additional expense and trouble; as the only instance in which I, through courtesy, yielded, fully proved. Time is an essential element in matters of this kind if accuracy and completeness are desired; but haste in production was insisted by those who forgot that they had neither proprietary right nor supervisory control. I properly refused to increase the stock of Brummagem wares in this line, and kept the tenor of my way as best I could under circumstances which were at times particularly irritating and depressing.

Probably the most serious difficulty with which I had to contend was in the endeavor to keep on good terms with myself; and here the proverb, He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city, applies. I cannot claim a large share of that magnanimity which belongs to a great soul, and, undoubtedly, there were times when, if I had been left to myself, I should have brought the undertaking to a sudden stop. I never for a second doubted my ability or strength of purpose to carry it to a successful termination if I only considered the amount of labor, the length of time, or the financial difficulties, singly or combined; for these could be surmounted. But when, in addition, I had to meet indifference, neglect and hostility, unaccountable, resolution and courage could not always be relied on. Wise counsel, which impressed not only the importance of completing the work, but also the inportance of completing it in the Society's name, fortunately prevailed. I speak of all these things because they

had a powerful effect in delaying progress, and in adding many figures to the wrong side of the balance sheet; and also because no true account could be given if mention of them were omitted.

Of the friends of this enterprise I cannot say too much, but I must content myself with a very inadequate acknowledgment of their great kindness, encouragement, and substantial aid. Foremost was Clark Jillson, whose loyal support, unqualified commendation, and firm defence in times of emergency, are fully appreciated now that he has passed into the hereafter. His contributions to the publication work of the Society amount to a very large sum, and, undoubtedly, saved the institution from dissolution. Of the late Honorable Stephen Salisbury a pleasant memory remains. His genuine interest in these, the annals of his native town, was, more than once, unmistakably manifested.* The uniform courtesy and ample generosity with which the several applications in behalf of the second series of the Records have been received by his son and successor, the present Mr. Salisbury, I will not enlarge upon in any Worcester gathering. His attendance here to-day would have greatly increased my satisfaction, and I regret

* In justice to truth I will say that this was not in the way of direct pecuniary assistance to the Record work, which Mr. Salisbury would have given if it had been requested. I did not solicit aid in this way for the first series, which comprised four volumes and included the Proprietary and Court Records, and the Town Records from 1722 to 1783. Mr. Salisbury and Mr. Curtis each purchased several copies of two of these volumes. What I particularly remember was Mr. Salisbury's intelligent and broad-minded view of the work. To the second series of the Records the present Mr. Salisbury subscribed seventy-five dollars for each of the five volumes.

that an important business matter has interfered to prevent it. Another good friend in the early times was our venerated townsman, Albert Curtis. I am indebted to Doctor Charles L. Nichols, Henry P. Upham of St. Paul, Minnesota, William H. Sawyer, Francis E. Blake of Boston, and Herbert Wesby, for large direct contributions; also to John C. Otis and William F. Abbot, for their more than friendly, and partially successful, exertions to carry out the intention of the committee of 1891. To all others who have in any way encouraged, approved or assisted the undertaking I now express my heartfelt appreciation. Last, but not least, the earnest efforts of President Hutchins to efface unpleasant memories, and the more material assistance he has afforded, deserve my sincere thanks.

And now a few words about the printed Records. They are comprised in nine volumes, one containing the Proprietary Records from 1667 to 1788, with all the plans; six the Town Records from 1722 to 1848; one the Births, Marriages and Deaths; and one the Records of the Court of General Sessions of the Peace during the first seven years of the County organization. Combined they make 3,425 pages. With the exception before mentioned, all the copying, indexing, and printing has been done by my hands, and every page has passed through the press under my supervision as editor. As to the quality of the work I will not affirm. I have never held to the utterly impracticable notion that in the percentage of purity in our lives or of perfection in our works we can attain the full 100. But accuracy has been the chief consideration in the production of these books, whatever degree of success may have been realized, and this accounts in part for the large deficit. About ten years' labor has been given to the work, but the first part appeared nearly twenty years ago.

In regard to the financial part, it seems to me that it is sufficient to say that this undertaking has been carried out, as the result before you shows. But a promise has been exacted that I would make a statement of the cost, and of the amount which I have received in return. In making this statement I use the figures of the Commissioner of Public Records, given in his second report published in 1890, the example being the first volume of Dedham Records, edited by Don Gleason Hill, Esq. This book contains 286 pages, and the total cost of making copy, index, comparing proof, editing, and printing one thousand copies was $964. Reducing this to pages gives $3.37 as the cost per page. Allowing for the difference between one thousand and three hundred copies, the last being the number of the Worcester Records printed, which is the cost of paper and press-work of seven hundred copies, we have $3.06 per page; and 3,425 pages give, with $400 additional for engraving, etc., the total cost of these nine volumes of Worcester Records: $10,880.50.

I have received: from sales of first series, $986; from the City appropriations in aid of second series, $2,500; direct contributions, $950; sales, second series, $383; allowed for room in Society's building, (say) $500. Total: $5,319.

Several causes contributed to this result, some of which I have detailed. An aversion on my part to the task of raising money by solicitation (from which I feel that I should have been relieved), and the long business and financial depression, were others.

My interest in the development of Systematic History is as strong as ever, and I hope to be able to exert my efforts still further in this direction, to add something to what has already been accomplished.

And now, Mr. President and Mr. Mayor, with the words of another I will close:

"No honor or reward, however great, can be equal to that subtle satisfaction that a man feels when he can point to his work and say, 'See, now, the task I promised you to perform with all loyalty and honesty, with might and main, to the utmost of my ability, and God willing, is to-day finished! Say, is it well and truly done?' And when the employer shall confess that 'it is well and truly done,' can there be any recompense higher than that to one's inward self?"

MAYOR SPRAGUE,

who was obliged to leave the company early on account of important public business, said that he would authorize Mr. Samuel S. Green, the librarian of the Free Public Library, to express for him his congratulations and hearty appreciation of the Record work, in behalf of the City of Worcester.

MR. HUTCHINS:—This meeting has been called for congratulations, and certainly the great Commonwealth of Massachusetts is to be congratulated upon the amount of Record work that has been done in it since this undertaking was started. The interest in this matter is evidenced by the presence here of the Massachusetts Commissioner of Public Records, Robert T. Swan, Esq., whom I now have the pleasure of introducing.

RECORD COMMISSIONER SWAN.

Mr. President and Gentlemen :

It is a great pleasure and satisfaction to be here, and to add my testimony to that of others who have known of this work of Mr. Rice.

I should almost hesitate to say anything before a company of gentlemen who are older than myself in these matters, were it not that in the position I now hold I have had occasion to visit the town and city headquarters, and to see the records and the officers, and to see the interest and the lack of interest pervading the various places. My office has become a sort of clearing-house for these matters, and people come to me for advice. It brings in experts like Mr. Rice, who come and bring me information that I am glad to disseminate. And I am sure that in relation to this edition of records, there is nothing superior, and, I think, nothing equal in the extent which it covers. As Mr. Rice says, it is hard to say just when it commenced, but I think there can be no doubt that it was the first of its kind. The work shows careful editing.

Some of the town records have been printed, and these range all the way through good, bad and indifferent. Many of them had better never have been printed, and the best of them fall short of what should have been done. If you take up these records you will find that one editor begins with the religious life of the town, and another with the military.

But a person taking up records like these reads between the lines, and sees the history for himself as he goes along. This kind of work is the only sure foundation to go upon. The great mistake in publishing town records is in looking

upon it as a business enterprise. I get many inquiries about the price of copying records. I usually reply that the copying of a single word is often worth more than the cost of a page. Since I have come here I have had intimation of other contemplated work in this line. I hope that it will not be done at present, until we have trained people to be experts. An expert must not only be a man who can decipher the ancient chirography, but he must be familiar with the early terms used in the records. A man to be an expert must be one who does not think he knows it all. I have cut out from one of my reports some entertaining remarks from one of the other kind. Speaking of some ancient records he had copied, he says: "In justice to myself, I could not copy such *bad spelling*. I have, therefore, *corrected*, *throughout the whole*, *the bad language in these records*, and I have in many instances, *abridged the records*." [The italics are mine.] To authorize a man to make such a record as that, is a piece of inexcusable folly.

Now in regard to these particular volumes, perhaps I can appreciate one of them at least, more than you, gentlemen, possibly can. And that is the record of Births, Marriages and Deaths. There is a bill now before the General Court to provide for supplying the deficiencies in such records; but Mr. Rice anticipated any bill of this kind, and has done what others would have been glad to do. I think the great amount of labor which he has done can be appreciated only by those who have had experience in this line of work. It entitles him to the gratitude of everyone who shall find their names in these volumes.

I have said that experts were necessary, but an expert must have something more than mere ability. He must have his heart in his work. Mr. Rice has never faltered

in his undertaking, but has carried it through, and has made a monument to his name which will last for all time. I think there is a large field in the Commonwealth for Mr. Rice. I have not wanted the towns to do this work themselves, because in some cases they do it so poorly.

MR. HUTCHINS:—Wherever our Records go through the country, in all the great libraries of the land, they are examples of Worcester's handiwork. The librarian of our Free Public Library, Mr. Samuel Swett Green, is widely known by his interest in these matters. We shall be glad to hear from Mr. Green.

CITY LIBRARIAN GREEN.

Mr. President:

I am sure that everybody in the City, who knows anything about this kind of work, feels grateful to Mr. Rice for the great amount of disinterested labor which he has performed. And I know that we all feel proud when the Commissioner of Public Records, who has common cognizance of such things, says, in a hearty and unreserved manner, that this work is of the highest excellence, and that it has set an example to the towns of the Commonwealth.

I find that I have unwittingly been helping along the work of Mr. Swan. I find that I have often to go to different towns to make suggestions as to how this and similar work can be better done. And almost invariably I have to make the suggestion that everything bearing upon the subject shall be gathered for the public library, and that all materials in manuscript shall be carefully preserved.

The reports of institutions and societies should be collected, and the library should be made the centre where all the materials for the history of the town shall be preserved. Thus they can have a collection which it will be necessary for anyone to consult if he wants to know anything about the history of that town. The first thing is to collect the material. Mr. Swan and Mr. Rice have been putting it in permanent form, so that it will never be destroyed.

It is very interesting to see what changes have been taking place in the methods of studying history in this country. Everyone now wants the original materials of history, and it is of the utmost importance that such materials as town records be preserved. Therefore they should be properly arranged, so that you can find out anything you wish about the history of the town.

It seems to me that a great influence has been exerted by the Johns Hopkins University. The purpose there appears to have been to have the pupils go back to the original sources of history. There seems to have been a great amount of interest excited in this work.

Now, supposing that anyone wants to know anything about the police department or the fire department in any town, or the support of the paupers there. How can any accurate information be obtained unless we refer to the town records, and how unlikely we are to find it, even then, unless they are put into print. You all realize that there is no better way of awakening interest in the study of history in general than through local history. Supposing you are interested to find all you can about one of your ancestors. You find out all about what he did in the Revolution; and then you are led to get a general view of that part of our history. And it is so in regard to any portion of the history of our country, or that of France or

England. Any man is doing a great work who makes it comparatively easy for the people of a town to make investigations in the history of that town, not only in insuring a better position of our own history, but in awakening interest which will lead to a broader interest in the history of the state and of the country. And it pleases me very much to notice that the officers in different educational institutions are of this mind. I find that where students of Harvard University are studying American History, they are very soon set to making these investigations, and a student coming from a certain town is given something to investigate about his native town—perhaps, for instance, it may be about the water-works of that town. And, generally speaking, I could hardly tell you how many of the students of Harvard College have come to me to ask for assistance in looking up the history of this town. And it is very certain that in this way they get up an interest in the history of the town, and also of other places; and thus it is, that work like this of Mr. Rice is of the greatest service to any town.

I should be very sorry indeed if there was not more of this work done. With the excellence of this work that Mr. Rice can do, it seems to me that he ought to be employed during the rest of his life. There is still a large field left in Worcester and Worcester County, and it would seem that with a little exertion on the part of his friends, he might be employed all the time. He ought to be well paid. He ought to have liberal payment for all he does. I hope sincerely that he will be kept at work. He is an expert whose services should be worth a great deal.

MR. HUTCHINS: —Mr. Rice has spoken of his regret at not having Mr. Salisbury here, but he has sent a letter. Letters from others who take a deep interest in this work have also been received, and these I will now read.

LETTERS.

FROM HON. STEPHEN SALISBURY,

President of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester.

WORCESTER, OCTOBER 30, 1897.

Franklin P. Rice, Esq.,

My dear sir:—I regret very much not to be able to accept your kind invitation to dine on November 3d, more particularly because I shall lose an opportunity for highly commending your work as shown in the nine volumes of Worcester Records which you have published so accurately and in so readable a form. The nearly four thousand printed pages show how much labor was required in their preparation, when the damaged and imperfect state of some of the original Records is borne in mind, especially when compared page by page, copy with original.

When we remember that the work represents nearly ten years of labor and that not more than half the value of the time occupied was paid for, we can realize the debt which citizens of Worcester owe for this unremunerated service. The pioneer work was undertaken in 1873 and since that time has been followed in other places. This and much more should be stated when considering this well executed and public-spirited work.

Sincerely yours,

STEPHEN SALISBURY.

FROM HON. SAMUEL A. GREEN, M. D.,

Librarian of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

My dear Mr. Rice:

I am glad to learn that the work of printing the Worcester Records is nearly completed. I know by experience that such undertakings never pay from a money point of view, but your

reward comes from knowing that it is a good thing for the City of Worcester, and that future antiquarians and historians will appreciate the work. The series of publications which you have edited with so much care will be an enduring monument to your industry and zeal. I am led to make these reflections from knowing how little the average citizen of any town cares for the critical labors of historical scholars, among whom I rank yourself.

Very truly yours,

SAMUEL A. GREEN.

FROM JAMES F. D. GARFIELD, ESQ.,

Secretary of the Fitchburg Historical Society.

I am glad to know that the printing of these Records is so nearly completed. I have been interested in watching the progress of their publication, and as the several volumes have appeared have noticed with pleasure the painstaking care and accuracy with which the work has been carried forward.

The increased interest in the preservation of municipal records, owing to the many losses by fire and the ravages of time, has resulted in the printing of more than one hundred volumes in various towns of New England, and nearly all of these have appeared since you commenced the publication of the Worcester Records. No doubt your example has largely influenced the publication of records in other places. Indeed it was a suggestion made by you which led to action by the Fitchburg Historical Society which resulted in the printing of the Fitchburg and Lunenburg Records. Yours very truly,

JAMES F. D. GARFIELD.

Franklin P. Rice, Esq.

FROM RICHARD O'FLYNN, ESQ.,

One of the original members of The Worcester Society of Antiquity.

My dear Mr. Rice:

Comparatively few of our citizens are aware of the splendid and lasting service you have rendered the City in rescuing from

possible destruction or decay the early Records of the Town. I do not hesitate to say that there is not another man in our City better qualified to undertake the work, which requires patience, perseverance. and a knowledge of ancient orthography—qualifications which your work abundantly proves that you possess.

You were a pioneer in the field, and led in the path which so many are now following. Yours very truly,

RICHARD O'FLYNN.

MR. HUTCHINS:—Mr. Don Gleason Hill, of Dedham, expected to be here, but found yesterday that it would be impossible for him to come. He says in his letter, however, that he hopes some other occasion will occur, and he will make it a point to attend and give his testimony to the value of the work.

I may mention the fact that the four men who started The Worcester Society of Antiquity are all still alive; and we have with us to-day the one who conceived the idea of it. I have no doubt he will be glad to say something on this occasion. I refer to Mr. Staples.

MR. SAMUEL E. STAPLES.

Mr. President and Gentlemen:

I hardly think it should be necessary for me to say anything. We all are proud of what has been accomplished. I feel that it is an honor to have been one of the original members of The Worcester Society of Antiquity. I have always taken a deep interest in the welfare of that Society. I am especially gratified that the early Records of Worcester are in print, and safe from all danger. It is a pleasure to belong to such a Society. I am glad to express to Mr. Rice my thanks for what he has done, and hope he may be permitted to do much more like work.

MR. HUTCHINS:—The Worcester Society of Antiquity is under deep indebtedness to Mr. Barton, the librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, who is present with us. I will now call upon Mr. Barton.

MR. EDMUND M. BARTON.

Mr. President and Gentlemen:

I wish to say that Mr. Rice's work has merited much from us, on account of the conscientious manner in which he has performed it. And this remark applies not only to his larger productions, but also to the lesser works which in a similar way are of use to every student. His Dictionary of Worcester is a production of that kind. His work has been done quietly, without noise. Worcester is a city not much given to foghorn music or bugle-playing,—a city in which workingmen go quietly to their labors.

I have been more than thirty years in my line of business at the American Antiquarian Society's rooms, and ever since I have known Mr. Rice it has been a great pleasure to have him come there, as it is to have all the members of the local Society. Whether Mr. Rice has been engaged in his special pursuits, or on other matters, we have been pleased to have him in our building. I always think that we are in some degree responsible for Mr. Rice's work.

I simply rise for the purpose of extending my congratulations personally. I feel proud of all the good work that is done in Worcester, but I know of nothing which has given me more satisfaction than that which Mr. Rice has done. I have always felt that typographically he bears the name of Franklin well.

MR. JOHN C. OTIS,

was introduced, and said: I must ask to be excused from making any remarks, owing to the lateness of the hour, but my presence here is sufficient evidence of my interest in this work.

MR. HUTCHINS:—Mr. Francis E. Blake, of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, has proved his interest in this work in the past and by coming here to-day. I will call upon him for remarks.

MR. FRANCIS E. BLAKE.

Mr. Chairman:

It is too late to detain you. I can only state that among the publications most in demand in the historical libraries, most assuredly these works of Mr. Rice are looked upon as the very best. I have admired one thing in Mr. Rice,—and I want to use a word which is not, perhaps, in the dictionary,—his *stick-to-it-iveness*. He has had the grit to carry the work through under great difficulties; and I am glad if at any time I have been able to render him any assistance. As for Mr. Rice, I don't know but that he would like to go all over it again.

I came here with very peculiar feelings to-day. I hardly knew whether it was to be a wake or a wedding. I believe I have never been to the former, but I have always understood that it was customary to have something inspiring on such occasions. And if this is a wake, it is certainly one of the inspiring kind. If this work of Mr. Rice is completed, we may know that it lives forever, from the

spreading of the printed copies; and we trust that further inspiration may come to him, and that he may go on doing this kind of work in the future, and that he may have a sufficient encouragement for his toil.

MR. HUTCHINS:—There is one gentleman here who has been quite close to Mr. Rice in all these years, and who knows the difficulties under which he has labored. I have no doubt that he would be glad to add his testimony to what has been said. I will call upon Mr. Abbot.

MR. WILLIAM F. ABBOT.

Mr. President and Gentlemen:

This is a very happy occasion to me, to know that my friend, Mr. Rice, has at last come to the end of his great work. It has been my privilege to become quite well acquainted with Mr. Rice, and the difficulties which have come in his way. I think that there can hardly be too much said of his *stick-to-it-iveness*.

I know that Mr. Rice has at times felt very despondent; but he has persevered. That is the kind of pluck and spirit I admire very much. He has done a work which, if it could be done in the other towns and cities in this State, would be of inestimable value in the future. There are places in the State, particularly in Essex County, where such work is greatly needed. I have been here in this city so long that Worcester history becomes interesting to me; and I am glad to know that my children, who are natives of this place, will have its history well preserved if they wish to consult it.

I do wish to congratulate Mr. Rice most heartily on the completion of this work, which has occupied his mind and his heart so long, and which will make everyone who wishes to look up points in the history of Worcester his debtor for all time.

Mr. Hutchins:—I hope an influence will go out from this meeting that will encourage this kind of work, and I hope that Mr. Rice will be properly reimbursed for future labors in which he may engage. The trouble with us is, that we cannot find words to rightly characterize the magnificent work which he has done. I suppose Mr. Rice will like to say a few more words.

Mr. Rice feelingly expressed his appreciation of the kind words which had been said, and thanked the gentlemen for their presence. The company separated with the feeling that the affair had been a great success in regard to its influence upon future record work.

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